

Message Text

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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2730

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NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR AO CG BE

SUBJ: SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH THE FRENCH

REF: BRUSSELS 3222

1. I HAVE FOLLOWING COMMENTS ON FRENCH POSITION REPORTED REFTEL:

2. OUR CURRENT ASSESSMENT IS THAT ODDS ARE AGAINST MOBUTU'S POLITICAL SURVIVAL. HOWEVER, THIS DOES NOT MEAN HIS DEMINSE IS IMMINENT FOR WE DO NOT YET PERCEIVE COALESCENCE OF POLITICAL OPPONENTS OR IMMEDIATE THREAT FROM WITHIN ARMY.

3. IT IS IN OUR INTEREST THAT ADVANCE OF KATANGANS BE CONTAINED AND KOLWEZI DEFENDED. THIS WOULD BUY TIME AND ENHANCE CHANCES FOR MEDIATION, AND LESSEN LIKELIHOOD OF PRECIPITANT POLITICAL COLLAPSE IN KINSHASA THAT COULD UNLEASH WIDESPREAD POLITICAL/ ECONOMIC CHAOS.

4. FRENCH ARE FULLY COMMITTED TO HELP MOBUTU AND ARE ALREADY STEPPING UP THEIR MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN DISCREET WAYS, E.G. ARRIVAL YESTERDAY OF MILITARY ADVISORS TO SERVE WITH FAZ IN SHABA, SET UP COMMO NETWORK BETWEEN KINSHASA AND KOLWEZI, SERVICE MIRAGES AND PANHARD ARMORED CARS, ETC. FRENCH AMBASSADOR SAYS THEY CAN DO EVERYTHING BUT GO INTO COMBAT. FRENCH PROBABLY

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REALIZE RISKS OF SUCH SUPPORT IN TERMS OF FAZ WEAKNESS AND VOLATILE POLITICAL SITUATION, AND THEREFORE WANT MAXIMUM US AND BELGIAN COMPANY.

5. SINCE CURRENT MILITARY NEEDS IN SHABA ENTAIL MORE HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANIZATION THAN HARDWARE, ADDITION OF PROFESSIONAL FOREIGN MILITARY PERSONNEL SHOULD HELP FAZ. MERCENARIES COULD

ALSO HELP, BUT ONLY RPT ONLY IF IN SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS AND VERY CAREFULLY RECRUITED. THIS TAKES TIME.

6. POLITICAL IMPACT OF FOREIGN MILITARY PARTICIPANTS IN SHABA SHOULD BE CAREFULLY WEIGHED. AS SEEN FROM HERE, LARGE NUMBER OF WHITE MERCENARIES SERIOUSLY RISKS SCUTTling CHANCES OF AFRICAN MEDIATION AND PROVIDING EXCUSE FOR ANGOLANS, CUBANS, ETC. TO ENTER FRAY. SMALLER NUMBERS OF LEGITIMATE EUROPEAN MILITARY PERSONNEL WOULD STILL CARRY POLITICAL RISKS BUT MUCH LESS SO THAN NUMEROUS MERCENARIES. MOST PALATABLE, ALTHOUGH PROBABLY LESS EFFECTIVE, WOULD BE AFRICAN MILITARY PERSONNEL, SUCH AS MOROCCANS. (FRENCH AMB TELLS ME THAT GOF HAS ALREADY DISCUSSED THIS WITH MOROCCAN GOVT, BUT THAT GOZ HAS NOT YET MADE FORMAL REQUEST FOR TROOPS FROM RABAT. NIGERIAN AMBASSADOR HERE (WHO INVOLVED IN MEDIATION EFFORT) BELIEVES AFRICAN TROOPS WOULD NOT IMPEDE MEDIATION, WHEREAS WHITE MERCENARIES WOULD BE RUINOUS. I VERY MUCH DOUBT LARGE NUMBER OF MERCENARIES COULD BE KEPT FROM PUBLIC VIEW FOR ANY PERIOD OF TIME, ALTHOUGH DECISION MOBUT CONVEYED TO ME YESTERDAY TO HENCEFORTH BAN ALL FOREIGN PRESS FROM SHABA MAY BE DESIGNED TO CONCEAL NEWLY-ARRIVED FRENCH MILITARY ADVISORS AND EVENTUAL INTRODUCTION OF MERCENARIES.

7. BELIEVE LARGE BELGIAN AND FRENCH INTERESTS, PARTICULARLY IN SHABA, WARRANT THEIR CONTINUING TO PLAY LEADING ROLE IN CURRENT MILITARY ASSISTANCE EFFORT. OUR OWN POSTURE OF MEASURED, NON-LETHAL AID SHOULD BE MAINTAINED, AT LEAST FOR TIME BEING. WE COULD OFFER TO SUPPORT AND SUPPLEMENT FRENCH EFFORTS BY FINDING DISCREET WAYS TO USE FMS CREDITS TO FACILITATE FRENCH PROVISION OF AMMUNITION FOR US-MADE ARMS USED BY FAZ, NOTABLY M-16'S.

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WE COULD ALSO JOIN FRENCH IN WEIGHING IN WITH MOROCCANS AND, IF FEASIBLE, I WOULD FAVOR USING FMS CREDITS FOR PURCHASING URGENTLY NEEDED PETROLEUM PRODUCTS. THERE MAY BE OTHER WAYS WE CAN READJUST PROGRAMMED USE OF EXISTING FMS CREDITS TO ADAPT TO CHANGING REQUIREMENTS, BUT THESE SHOULD BE CAREFULLY REVIEWED BEFORE DECISIONS MADE. IF FRENCH CONFIRM MERCENARIES GOING IN, THEN WE SHOULD WEIGH POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF OUR TAKING ANY OF THESE STEPS.

8. FRENCH FOR THEIR PART, PROBABLY COULD PLAY MORE SUPPORTIVE ROLE IN MEDIATION THAN THEY SEEM TO HAVE SO FAR.

9. FINAL NOTE: WE SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT MUCH OF THE PRESSURE WE ARE NOW GETTING FROM BOTH THE FRENCH AND BELGIANS PROBABLY ORIGINATES WITH MOBUTU HIMSELF. ALSO, FRENCH AND BELGIANS HAVE INTEREST IN PASSING BUCK TO US AS WAY OF RATIONALIZING BOTH AT HOME AND TO GOZ THE LIMITED EXTENT OF THEIR OWN ASSISTANCE.. WHILE I BELIEVE WE COULD AND SHOULD DO MORE ALONG VERY MEASURED LINES SUGGESTED PARA 7 ABOVE, WE SHOULD ALSO BE VERY CAREFUL

TO DO SO IN WAYS THAT DO NOT UPSET MEDIATION EFFORT OR OUR OWN
PUBLIC IMAGE OF SUPPORT FOR ZAIRE'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY
RATHER THAN MOBUTU HIMSELF. OUR MAJOR CONTRIBUTION SHOULD CONTINUE
TO LIE IN EXPEDITING DELIVERY OF FMS PURCHASES ALREADY IN THE
PIPELINE AND VIGAROUSLY PURSUING OUR IMPORTANT PROGRAMS OF
BALANCE-OF-PAYMENT RELIEF, FOOD AID AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT
ASSISTANCE.

10. FOR OPS CENTER: THIS MESSAGE SHOULD BE REPEATED NIACT IMMEDIATE
TO SECRETARY VANCE AND UNDER SECRETARY HABIB PRIOR TO THEIR
MEETING APRIL 2 WITH PRES GISCARD.
ALSO PASS LONDON FOR ASST SECRETARY SCHAUFELLE.
CUTLER

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NNN

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